

starters for Sunday

Monday of Holy Week

21 March 2016

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Bidy Crossfield and Wendy Young from the Christian Aid Worship and Theology Collective, for their thoughts on the Monday of Holy Week.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

[Isaiah 42: 1-9](#)

The prophet Isaiah addresses the people of Israel, defeated and taken into captivity by the Babylonians. This traumatic and devastating experience of exile will have raised deep questions about identity, their own and God's. The old answers are no longer enough. These words in Isaiah seek to both bring reassurance and invite a new way of being in the world.

Downcast eyes are encouraged to lift their gaze and to see. They may be surprised to see a servant rather than a warrior coming to their rescue. But the former things have come to pass; this is justice by another way. A new thing is being declared, a declaration of reconciliation not retaliation. Despite how it feels they are still 'taken by the hand and kept' by God, they are not abandoned. But things can no longer be as they were.

They are now to be a covenant to the people. Their liberation will lead others to freedom. Justice for them means justice for all. At a time when they feel like little more than a dimly burning wick they are told that they are a light to the nations. Not that they will be a light when restored, but that even with their wounds they are a source of healing.

At the beginning of Holy Week as we hear these words and lift our gaze to the suffering servant we find reassurance that vulnerability is a source of healing. It is in recognising our shared need for justice and liberation that we can truly serve others. This may seem like a new way of being as we consider the mission of the church in Scotland and in the world. But we are also reminded of this by those who are marginalised, by those we seek to serve: 'If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.' (*Lilla Watson, Indigenous Australian*).



[Psalm 36: 5-11](#)

This is one of the few Psalms where David is identified as a servant of the Lord. We are given an insight in verse 11 as to the context of the inspiring and uplifting words of verses 5-10. This psalm is being written under pressure, it is a plea for protection. While this may be a personal plea for protection it is made in the confident knowledge of the extensive, abundant and steadfast love of God for all of creation (vs6). The Psalmist draws our attention to the wonder of creation. We gaze on the heights of the heavens, the clouds, the mighty mountains, the great deep, the expanse of the eagle's wings and to the rivers and fountains. In a world of hardship, conflict, hunger, thirst, injustice and cruelty we are reminded that despite all of this ugliness there is so much more that is beautiful in this world. Each of these wonders of creation provide a revelation of the steadfast love of God. The refugee finds refuge, the hungry find a feast, the thirsty drink deep from the river of God's delights. The Psalmist provides reassurance for us all that despite the darkness of the world, the darkness of Holy Week, there is nothing in all of creation that can separate us from the steadfast love of God(cf Romans 8:39.) Praying this psalm can help us to enter into solidarity with all those seeking protection and refuge across the world today. Such prayer can also condition us to participate in God's works of justice and righteousness throughout the world.

[Hebrews 9: 11-15](#)

The book of Hebrews focuses on the role of Jesus Christ and his relationship to the Jewish tradition. This passage is case in point and for those first listeners the details of blood sacrifice would have been very familiar. While the details may be far removed from western culture the essential message of this passage remains as potentially transformative today as it did for those first listeners. The way into the presence of God is wide open. In the incarnation, death and resurrection Jesus reconciled humanity to God in ways that nothing or no-one else can. This radical message of the new covenant can transform our dead works into living worship in the world.



[John 12: 1-11](#)

It is an inviting scene. Jesus is reclining at the table, eating with those he loves and is dearly loved by. We find Martha busy with serving and Mary at the feet of her Lord, again. (cf. [Luke 10:38-42](#)). There is plenty of commentary on the sensuous nature of this scene, the pungent smell of the perfume and the intimacy of Mary wiping Jesus' feet with her hair. This account is written by someone who understands the depth of love being poured out in this moment, who understands this as an extravagant act of worship.

It is Judas who objects and for fear that we may have any sympathy with his position we are given two asides by the writer. First, Judas is the one who will betray Jesus; some have said his betrayal is because of this very incident. Second, Judas did not care for the poor. His objection then was not motivated by compassion for the poor. Like those who often use the phrase 'you will always have the poor with you' to avoid giving to the cause of ending poverty, Jesus responds by highlighting how Judas has missed the point.

This moment, of all moments, is about the present moment. It is about Jesus being there with them. Whether Mary recognised Jesus as the Word made flesh or as fully human she truly values this moment. She knows what is of true worth. It is also, in the way of John, a sign for the imminent death and burial Jesus will soon encounter. And for fear we may again miss the point, John directs us again to the context. We are in the home of the resurrected Lazarus. We may be journeying towards the darkness of Good Friday but Sunday is also coming.

Sermon Ideas

Meditation on John 12: 1-11

Bethany was alive;

buzzing with excitement.

The Passover was only six days away and Jesus was still around.

People were still talking about Lazarus being raised to life.

Quietly talking to one another about the things that had happened,
always looking over their shoulder.

Just in case someone may hear and that's how the wrong things get around.



Things were a little uncertain to say the least.
But I tried to carry on as normal as possible.
So I prepared the meal which Martha was serving out.
Jesus and Lazarus ate together.

We were talking in hushed tones over the events of the last few days;
what had happened; how the atmosphere seemed tense.

It seemed right. I thought the time was right;
So I slowly took the perfume and gently poured it over Jesus' feet.
As I lowered my head my hair fell forward so I did a very bold thing,
exotic and beautiful.
Very slowly and gently I massaged our Saviour's feet and as I did, the aroma filled the house.

People were still.
They were silent.
As they watched,
the place was silent.

Silence.

The calm, thoughtful ambience we interrupted by the angry voice of Judas Iscariot.
He was asking why this perfume wasn't sold for at least 300 silver coins.
And why the money wasn't given to the poor.
Silently we questioned Judas' reasons for this outburst.

He just didn't understand my reasons for doing this.

Jesus understood.

He knew why I was doing this.
He felt the love he needed to feel.
He knew what was ahead.



The atmosphere was again broken by Jesus's plea for Judas to leave me alone.

Jesus knew.

He knew and he wanted Judas to leave me alone so I could prepare my God for his burial.

My Lord understood the importance of the perfume.

“We will always have the poor with us but you won't always have me. She has kept this perfume for the day of my burial.”

Silence, again

I was numb inside.

Deep inside.

Burial.

I knew. He knew.

By now, word had got round that Jesus was here so the silence was interrupted by the crowds wanting to see him and any excuse to see my brother, Lazarus. The resurrection spectacle!

I slipped away, my heart still pounding.

Full of gratitude and relief.

Full of love and sadness.

Full of tears and grief.

Come what may, I will be there by his side.

As he was and is for me.

Prayers

Opening responses

You do not shout or lift up your voice
to make it heard in the street.

Come quietly, Lord Jesus



A bruised reed you will not break
A dimly burning wick you will not quench

Come gently, Lord Jesus

You will not faint or be crushed
until justice is established on earth.

Come now, Lord Jesus

Amen

Prayer of confession

When we withhold our best from you and your world

Lord forgive us

When we bruise with our words and hurt with our actions

Lord forgive us

When we ignore the plight of those seeking refuge and asylum

Lord forgive us

When we neglect the earth and all of creation

Lord forgive us

When we overlook the prisoner and those who are outcast

Lord forgive us

When we look on the devotion of others with judgement

Lord forgive us

When we betray you in our hearts and through our lives

Lord forgive us

Thank you, that by your grace and mercy we can approach you
and enter into your presence, knowing we are forgiven.

Amen.



Prayer of intercession

Lord, extend your steadfast love
to all those today who are living under
the shadow of death
the shadow of conflict
the shadow of illness
the shadow of hunger
the shadow of abuse
the shadow of loneliness
the shadow of grief
the shadow of depression
the shadow of anxiety
the shadow of homelessness
the shadow of poverty
Lord, extend your steadfast love
so all people may take refuge
in the shadow of your wings.
Amen

A Prayer of response (to John 12 meditation)

Lord God,
You are the God who understands pain and hurt;
struggle and injustice.

Yet you also recognise love;
real, deep heartfelt love,
love that hurts.

The love that you gave to us all so freely.



The vapours of perfume, gentleness and beauty were there.
The room was filled with the aroma of a love that was so deep,
it penetrated through the anger, the uncertainty and misplaced belief.
It oozed from your love through to the despair and unbelief of humanity.

Compassionate God,
Help us to recognise all you did for us and let us really know the depth of your love.
Loving Lord,
be with us as we take every step on this journey.
As we travel through Holy Week walk with us and be by our side
as we celebrate your resurrection.
Be with us this day and every day.
Amen



In addition to the above prayers, prepared by our contributor, other prayers may be found in *Living Stones* which is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2015. *Living Stones* is available from [St Andrew Press](#)



Musical Suggestions

Isaiah 42: 1-9

CH4 168	God weeps at love withheld
CH4 283	The voice of God goes out to all the world

Psalms 36: 5-11

CH4 28	Thy mercy, Lord is in the heavens
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Hebrews 9: 11-15

CH4 393	We turn to God when we are sorely pressed
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John 12: 1-12

CH4 557	O Love that Wilt Not Let Me Go
CH4 501	Take this moment, sign and space
CH4 503	I will offer up my life in spirit and truth
CH4 795	Take, o take me as I am
CH4 801	Ubi caritas



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Living Stones](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to Bidy Crossfield and Wendy Young for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

